

Summary - Public Participation Program for the ABAG
Environmental Management Plan

Congress intended by the Federal Water Pollution Control Act to clean up the nation's waters by 1983. With the Clean Air Act, Congress wanted to clean up the nation's air. ABAG's job in the next two years is to make sure that the Bay Area meets the environmental quality standards required by Federal and State laws.

Air or water pollution doesn't stop when it gets to a city or county boundary. What happens in one city affects the people in another city. Solid waste disposal is a common problem in many parts of the Bay Area. Since these problems go beyond local jurisdictions and will require regional solutions, the Bay Area's local governments have agreed that this important planning should be done by local officials acting through their association of governments--ABAG.

Effective public participation will be vital to preparing a plan which can be carried out with public support. Federal regulations identify three specific "publics" to be involved: local government officials, officials of regional agencies, and the general public. The ABAG program is designed to involve each of these groups at four key points in the program: (1) starting the program, (2) defining the problems, (3) review of the draft plan, and (4) choosing the final plan. Throughout, the program stresses maximum feasible direct contact of the decision-makers with the public, and opportunities for the public to respond with their concerns and ideas. The program is organized at two levels, region-wide and in each county.

Regionwide

The public needs to be informed and respond to proposals in regional perspective. The major parts of the regionwide program are:

1. A basic policy-making group, the Environmental Management Task Force (EMTF) is responsible for preparation of the plan and its recommendation to ABAG for approval. The EMTF is composed of forty-three individuals; elected officials representing cities and counties, major regional agencies' representatives, a State Senator, and representatives of thirteen major citizen and private interest groups in the region. Elected officials represent cities, counties, and a number of regional agencies. Altogether there are 24 elected officials on EMTF, who constitute a majority. The EMTF has four policy committees--made up entirely of its own members; Plan Preparation, Plan Implementation, Public Participation, and Work Program and Budget. The EMTF meets monthly, the committees meet as needed at the call of the EMTF chair. All other public participation activities are tied to getting information from the EMTF and responses back to this body.
2. Nine advisory committees--chaired by the ABAG staff, have been established for each major part of the plan and its preparation. These advisory committees provide technical background and assistance for

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the staff to assure that the proposed plans are technically sound. The membership of the advisory committees has been carefully balanced to ensure adequate representation from public agencies, business firms and conservation groups.

3. The EMTF chairman and members hold informal luncheons and working meetings to discuss the program with leaders of key Bay Area organizations and give them an opportunity for early participation. Thus far meetings have been held with County Administrators, City Managers, conservation, labor, and business groups. Meetings are being planned with representatives of aging, minorities, and media.
4. A network of 12 depository libraries has been set up, with at least one library in each of the nine counties. They have materials for all meetings, notices, minutes, and all reports from the program, as well as free public information materials.
5. A group of County Administrators and City Managers has been formed to work directly with the ABAG staff particularly on defining feasible implementation measures and financial arrangements to carry out the plan.
6. Supporting materials are prepared to describe the program at each stage of the process.
7. The ongoing ABAG Citizen Alliance program has been expanded to support a special category of citizen programs related to the environmental management program. ABAG provides staff assistance and help with out-of-pocket costs for selected projects by citizen groups that will aid public understanding and participation in the EMP.
8. A special study will assist the ABAG staff and EMTF in identifying affirmative action provisions and recommendations that should accompany the Environmental Management Plan.

County Level Programs

The Bay Area has a population of 4.8 million, more than 100 cities and counties, and is larger than some states. Consequently, the program must reach out into all parts of the region. Public participation programs are established in each county to bring the issues closer to governments and citizens in each area and hear their response. The program includes:

1. Roundtable discussions with citizen group leaders are scheduled in every county for each major step in the program. At the first meetings in the Fall of 1976 the EMP was described and discussions at each meeting prepared reports back to EMTF with suggestions for early EMTF decisions on a checklist of environmental, social, economic factors to use in judging the plan. The county discussions are run by EMTF liaison team members to stress direct contact of citizens with the decision makers. Additional rounds of meetings, workshops, and discussions keyed to the major decisions will be set in May-June 1977 and through the Fall 1977 and Winter 1978. Each meeting is specifically designed to provide information to citizens and to give EMTF members ideas about pending decisions.

2. To make sure close communication is maintained with local governments elected officials and key staff, periodic meetings are held with the mayors conferences in each county, and Boards of Supervisors. One-to-one meetings between staff and elected officials are scheduled to explore the program in detail. Periodic written reports to elected officials are planned. Additionally, meetings have been held with city managers associations, public works directors, and planning directors in each county. Working sessions with groups of elected officials and policy staff will continue to review the findings and plan proposals. The purpose of the meetings is to make sure officials know what's going on early so problems can be identified and ironed out. To do this, officials must have a full opportunity to be heard as the program is developed.
3. ABAG is contracting with counties to prepare the county Surface Runoff Plans which will be a major portion of the Environmental Management Plan. Each county "lead agency" has set up its own public participation program to assist in the preparation of the Surface Runoff Plan. County-level policy review groups of citizens and officials are being formed to review the policy proposals for all of the Environmental Management Program. Some counties are using existing cooperative working groups already established for policy discussions involving city and county elected officials. New groups have been created in other counties that previously have not had such groups.
4. Special newsletters and other materials are being prepared to describe the program in each county.

Regionwide Support Materials for the Program

One-page brief program guide

Tabloid-style summaries with questionnaires at each stage of the program

50-page work program summary

Program capsules which summarize major program components

Slide shows designed for use by county lead agency staff and community groups so that information about specific programs and programs in each area can be added.

The EMP will be discussed on T.V. programs this spring and summer. Further use of television is anticipated during the Fall review period and Winter-Spring approval period.

Audio visual programs and a tabloid-style description of the plan proposals will be prepared in the Fall of 1977.

Schedule of Activities

The emphasis of the program will change to reflect the four major steps in plan preparation and approval as noted below:

Fall 1976: Describing the program - Initial contact with leaders of local government and key citizen groups to alert them about the program and get early response.

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Spring 1977: Defining the problems - Concentrate on identifying the specific problems to be solved and react to some preliminary ideas for solutions. Concentrate on involving as many groups as possible.

Fall 1977: Review of the draft plan - Maximum public participation to discuss the draft management plan proposals.

Winter-Spring 1978: Choosing the final plan - Continued public review and response to define areas of agreement for the final plan.

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